

MARCH 26-APRIL 1, 2023

# SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW

World Theatre Day  
March 27



P 3,4  
COVER  
STORY

WOMEN DIRECTORS IN STAGE

# In search of fair footing





Though he is a trained cinematographer, his heart lies in direction. So, it came as no surprise to Odisha's film fraternity when Puri-born Ashutosh Pattnaik bagged a National and two State Awards for his documentary film 'Srikhetra Ru Sahijata'. The promising filmmaker loves connecting with the common man on street when an opportunity comes along



With late father Prafulla K Pattnaik



With mother Baijayantimala Mohanty

### Synonymous to weekdays

Sundays, which are basically for clearing past week's backlog, are synonymous to week days for me. Post all the works, I hardly get any time to rejuvenate. So, I don't consider Sunday a day off in a real sense.

### Compulsive chef

I only cook when it is required as I know just the basics. But post marriage it has become regularity. I love our land's staple diet 'Pakhala' and 'Machha bhaja'.

### Love is Cuttack; Puri is identity

I was born in Puri while my wife belongs to Cuttack where I live at the moment. Though I love the Millennium City for many reasons, Akshaya Mohanty being one of them, my identity lies in Puri. One is my love while the other is my identity.



With wife Ananya Kanungo



With friends

### Solo traveller

I don't travel much, I prefer staying alone and spending time with self. I also don't believe in glamorous adventures, even if I plan something, I make sure it is solo.

### Connecting with common man

I love communicating with people in streets, the rickshaw pullers and the hawkers. Talking with them gets me the raw and real information that don't come from any source. I believe that documentary makers should present raw reality to the viewers.

### Music mood

I love listening to Akshaya Mohanty, sometimes I switch to Honey Singh, other times it is Abhijit Majumdar. I have specific time of the day selected for genre and artists.



SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

**WhatsApp This Week**

**Only on Sunday POST!**

Send in your most interesting WhatsApp messages and memes received to: [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) And we will publish the best ones

**THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE**

- What is the best thing about living in Switzerland? Well, the flag is a big plus.
- My email password has been hacked. That's the third time I've had to rename the cat.
- Cleaning mirrors is a job I could really see myself doing.
- An optimist believes that we live in the best world. A pessimist is afraid that it might be true.

**SAVE NATURE**

Sir, Last week's cover story The Burning Forest (March 21) in Sunday POST emphasises the rows of negligence by the administration and the necessary solutions to act upon. The health of our forest environment has been deteriorating due to the negligible collaboration between immediate stakeholders and the forest department. To make the matter worse, the attempt of locals to gather mahua and kendu leaves is in complete violation of regulations, and the forest authorities are reluctant to intervene. It requires immediate action from the authorities concerned, as it is one of the primary reasons behind the devastation. Besides, the problem of wildfires needs to be widely publicised to create mass awareness. By taking the necessary precautions and encouraging active involvement of the neighbourhood communities reliant on the forest for their sustenance, we can check the unfortunate incidents that claim many wild lives.

**CHINTAMANI SAHU, PURI**

**LETTERS**

**A WORD FOR READERS**

Sunday POST is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Please send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to [features.orissapost@gmail.com](mailto:features.orissapost@gmail.com) B-15, Industrial Estate, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar - 751010, Orissa. Phone (0674) 2549982, 2549948



WORLD THEATRE DAY - MARCH 27

# In search of fair footing

While the women directors have flourished across the country, the odds don't seem too great for their counterparts in Odisha, a state having a theatre tradition of about 150 years



A scene from Susmita Rana directorial *Tyagi*

BIJAY MANDAL, OP

Nadira Babbar, Sanjana Kapoor, Mita Vashisth, Shova Balsavar, Usha Ganguly, Tripti Mitra, Sai Paranjape, Rashi Bunny, Pearl Padmasee and the list goes on. These are a few women theatre practitioners who have carved their special space in Indian theatre as directors. While the women directors have flourished across the country, the odds don't seem too great for their counterparts in Odisha. Despite having a theatre tradition of about 150 years, the state is yet to produce a woman director at national level. But of late some young Odia women have taken up direction and made a name for themselves. Ahead of World Theatre Day, a few of them shared with **Sunday POST** the reasons women find it harder to make the cut, the challenges they have faced, and what is required to add to the list of women directors in Odisha.



into a woman the moment she is born. A girl is brought up with a belief that she is born to become a good wife and a good mother only which is not the case. With such conditioning, it is really difficult to face the challenge of taking up professions that are believed to be meant for men."

The youngest Odisha Sahitya Akademi award winner says she has faced more challenges in life as a woman than as a drama director. After wasting her talent and underestimating her power as a woman for years to become a good wife and a good mother, she realised

it was time to respond to her calling. "Despite my realisation, I couldn't change myself all of a sudden. I first achieved a level by reading dramas, writing scripts and acting in plays for years. It took almost 25 years to direct my first stage production *Akhi* at a national theatre festival in Paradip in 2017. After directing a couple of solo plays, the real challenge was when I directed over 20 artistes, five of them were directors, in Odia play *Raktamati*. It was not an easy task to make so many men tolerate me and follow my instructions," recalls Jena. Speaking on the secret of her success, she says, "I didn't let my innate tenderness be a reason to lose the battle. People around me often consider my sensitivity as weakness but I know that it is my strength. Besides, all male crew members don't pose problems;

I get cooperation from many of them." Asked about the status of Odisha's women directors at national level, Jena says women empowerment is limited to pen and paper at every domain and theatre is no different. However, she takes pride that her play was once staged along with those directed by legendary women directors of India like Nadira Babbar and Rashi Bunny. "Canmass organised a national festival of dramas directed exclusively by women. Actress-director Bhaswati Basu and I represented Odisha in that festival. It was quite satisfying that our plays were performed with the plays helmed by celebrity directors like Nadira Babbar, Rashi Bunny and others," reminisced Jena who had a oneliner ahead of World Theatre Day- Let us work for theatre till our last breath.

**'A woman is not born to become a good wife, a good mother only'**  
Direction is an act of creativity that transforms one's thought onto the stage and there shouldn't be any gender discrepancy in the matter. But unfortunately, all things that should happen, don't happen in our society and having a handful of women directors in Odisha is not surprising for her, says Nibedita Jena, a prominent name in the theatre circle of Odisha. Jena, also an actress, playwright, poet and researcher, continues: "It seems that the whole world starts conspiring to transform a girl



A scene from Odia play *Raktamati*



**'COME, SEE AND CONQUER'**

Monideepa Gupta, a drama director and secretary of Koraput-based theatre troupe Nandanik said, "Government's special projects to educate women and increase female literacy rate paint the true picture of our society. In a system where a woman is not even allowed to question, it is difficult to visualise men willing to follow her instruction and enact her concept on stage. Not just in Odisha, there are many places in India where women are not allowed to express themselves in creative medium and often denied equal rights. No wonder, we don't have too many women directors in the country if we consider a few



Monideepa during a rehearsal session

metropolises and active theatre centres as exceptions."

Though the number of women directors working in theatres in Odisha is less, the scene is not depressing, Monideepa, who regularly organises workshops and open air shows to promote theatre in an under-developed

district like Koraput, was quick to add.

"Theatre practitioners like Sujata Priyambada, Manidipa Mallick and Bhaswati Basu have already created space for themselves in both acting and direction. I believe they have set a platform with their body of work for more female directors to take up direction," she

added.

On the challenges of a woman director, she says direction is always challenging no matter whether it is taken up by a man or a woman.

"Since, it is a part of theatre practice, I don't attach more importance to the hurdles, especially for women. I believe no creative journey is smooth, so is drama direction," Monideepa pointed out.

Underlining the hallmark of a good director, she further says, "Director is the leader of the pack. When the team achieves something, the leader should make others feel that they all are an integral part of it. A leader shouldn't impose his/her idea on others. Moreover, s/he should help others explore their talents to script success."

Her message for women directors was the old Latin proverb Veni, Vidi, Vici, (come, see and conquer).



A scene from play *Chring Chring* featuring Sujata Priyambada

**'COORDINATION BETWEEN REGIONAL AND NATIONAL WOMEN DIRECTORS IMPORTANT'**

Sujata Priyambada has toured many countries as part of Natya Chetana, one of the premier theatre troupes of Odisha, and showcased her talent. She impressed the critics by adopting a unique style to recreate Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Rebati* in her solo play *Reboti, Eiboti, Seiboti*.

Echoing Monideepa Gupta's sentiment, she says, "In the present scheme of things, expecting men to accept a woman as their director and leader is asking for too much. There are logistic issues too. Arranging for rehearsal spaces,

sponsors and finance needs a lot of leg work which is quite challenging for a female director as there is no denying that men are better equipped to handle such issues as they are physically better placed than women."

Except for the physical aspects, women are better in other departments of a play production. But in a male-driven society, it is becoming increasingly difficult for women to make their presence felt at the top level as directors as not many male directors are ready to give them that space, quips Sujata.

On the status of women directors at

national level, she said, "We have to admit that women directors from Odisha don't enjoy a great presence nationally because no effort has been made at any level to give exposure to the women directors. No theatre festival comprising women directors has been held in Odisha if the one organised by Canmass of Paradip is kept aside. The zero coordination between the regional and national women theatre directors hasn't helped the cause either."

**'ODISHA'S WOMEN DIRECTORS ARE UNDERREPRESENTED NATIONALLY'**

With nearly 30 successful plays and several state and national level honours to her credit, young theatre director **Susmita Rana Pattnaik** from Balasore is an epitome of women leadership.

Women always think little differently than the men. Since direction is a creative profession, participation of more women in it will only add value and there shouldn't be any gender bias in this matter, she says.

Susmita believes lack of professional training is a major reason behind so few women directors in Odisha. Besides, people here maintain a double standard while judging the talent of women, rues the founder director of Nayeeka Baleswar.

"Here we underestimate our female talents but profusely applaud the girls of other states when they come here with their plays because they get trained at institutes like National School of Drama and are backed by 'God Fathers'. Realising this grassroots problem, Subodh Pattnaik's Natya Chetana conducted a workshop to groom women directors in 2005 and my troupe Nayeeka Baleswar was born," recalled Susmita.

As a director she has faced many challenges and the biggest of them being creating a dedicated troupe. Women don't get committed theatre workers easily to direct a play at the beginning. But once this hurdle is overcome, things become smooth, she said.



"Another problem is to find a good script which made me pen the scripts of my first three plays. This apart, finance is also an important issue for which a director has to play the role of a producer," added the

director of Anya Eka Rebati.

She acknowledges that women directors in Odisha are underrepresented at national level.

"There are only 4/5 women – Bhaswati Basu, Sujata Priyambada, Nivedita Jena and me – who are directing plays in Odisha. There is a need to induct more women into the fold and they should be encouraged at both government and non-government levels," said Susmita.

Advising the upcoming talents, she went on to add that to become a good director one needs to understand the underlying message of a script. The directors should also understand the characters, their language, costumes and the timing of the incident. Away from the conventional, a good director should also try to present something new to the audience using his/her creativity.

She says the art of theatre helps make good human beings. Therefore, in the present circumstance, more girls should come forward and make direction in their career to use theatre as a medium to bring about positive changes in the society.



A scene from the play *Tyagi* directed by Susmita Rana Pattnaik



# UTKALAMANI'S BIRTHPLACE TURNS MUSEUM AHEAD OF UTKAL DIVAS

# Restoring heritage

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

As Odisha turns 88 this year, since its independence from Bihar Province, the celebration of this day will be incomplete without reminiscing about the contributions of Utkal Sammilani and one of its prominent members, Utkalamani Pandit Gopabandhu Das. A social thinker, reformer, political activist, journalist, poet, and essayist, who went on to become the flagbearer of the movement that later resulted in the formation of a politically separate state under British rule on a linguistic basis.

His famous lines on patriotism "*Misu mora deha e desha matire, desabasi chali jaantu pithire, Desara swarajya pathe jete gaadha, misu tabin padi mora mansa bada*" still reverberates in the hearts of every Odia. He was bestowed with the title of 'Utkalamani' (Jewel of Odisha) with mission, vision, and sacrifices by Prafulla Chandra Roy, the father of chemical science in India.

Utkalamani was born October 9, 1877, in a small village called Suando under Satyabadi police station in Puri district. The village is situated on the bank of the river Bhargavi, a sacred river for the people of coastal Odisha. While the ideology of Utkalmani transcended and flourished throughout the state, the native village and the ancestral house of the social worker remained in the same dilapidated condition since his death. The administration recently stepped in to renovate his ancestral house and beautify his village Suando Peeth to commemorate the freedom fighter.

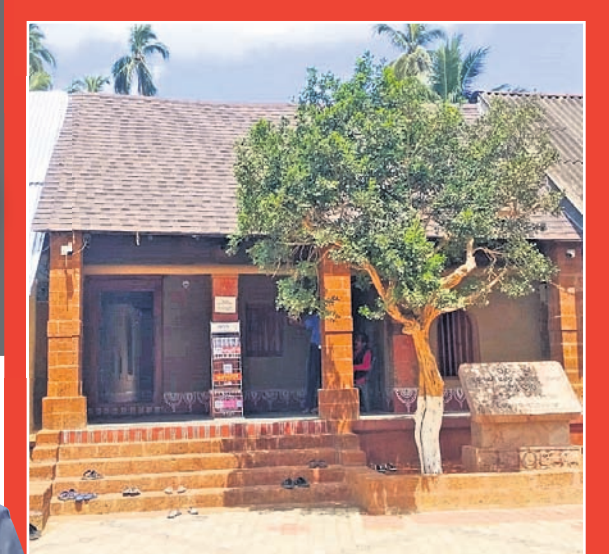
On the 88th anniversary of Utkala Dibasa **Sunday POST** takes a look on the refurbishment of Suando, Utkalmani's birthplace:

Natives of the village had been accustomed to seeing the village in ruins from time immemorial, and the acknowledgement of the village and its heritage was a long overdue.

Elaborating on the earlier derelict situation, a local says, "Nothing was done to commemorate him before, and that clearly reflected in our current and upcoming generations as they were unaware of his contribution to the state. In his ancestral house, in one of the rooms, Gopabandhu's family deities, Binod Bihari (Krishna) and Radha, are worshipped, and even the divine presence did not bring any luck to this room."

The current administration came forward to enshrine Suando by honouring it as a heritage village. The ancestral home of the eminent social thinker has been converted into a museum for people to visit and pay respect. A 15-foot bronze statue of Utkalamani has been installed with an idea to transform Suando into a heritage village. The road from Pattanaikia Chhak along NH-316 connecting the village of Utkalamani has been widened to facilitate better communication for visitors. The village entrance is also equipped with an information centre to guide visitors and provide information.

Rabindranath Das, a descendant of Gopabandhu and caretaker of the house, is grateful for the renovation and commemoration. He says, "I feel happy and satisfied about the renovation of the birthplace of Gopabandhu Das. It may be a little late, but I am



The house where Utkalamani was born



Successor Rabindranath Das with Utkalamani's idol

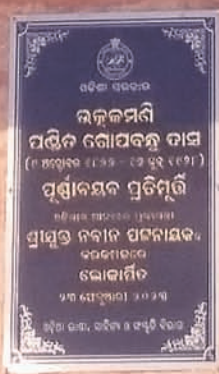


satisfied that people are considering visiting the place and showing love to it. I think people are happy to reclaim the birthplace of Utkalamani."

He adds, "We were unable to repair the house as we had to depend on the income from the meagerly inherited agricultural land before the renovation. When the redevelopment project of Suando was announced in the year 2020, we were waiting for the project to be completed and watching the reactions of the public, who sometimes visit the birth place to offer homage. From the morning till the evening, people visit the place with their families and learn the events that happened with Utkalamani."

Narrating the villager's excitement, he comments, "The villagers are too delighted to see that the 'village son' has been respected in the state with the installation of a 15-ft bronze statue and a complete renovation of his house."

Upon asking the local villagers about the redevelopment, some of them commented, "We are very happy to see that our village has been given some sort of importance by the people because of the redevelopment and because of Gopabandhu's contribution to the state. I think it is because of his aspiration to make the state progressive and independent from the Bihar Presidency. We have heard the stories about him from our forefathers on how he struggled in his life and how he died before the freedom. We are happy that our village was the one where this brave-heart was born and lived up to his name, making us feel proud."





# SRK gets Deepika's substitute!

After creating a storm at the box office, Shah Rukh Khan starrer *Pathaan* is set to make its way to the OTT platform. The superstar recently answered some fans' questions and reacted to their posts in a promotional video.

In the video, SRK started by saying, "I have your comments,



some of your videos, and some of the questions you have asked. I am going to try and answer them". The actor first watched a

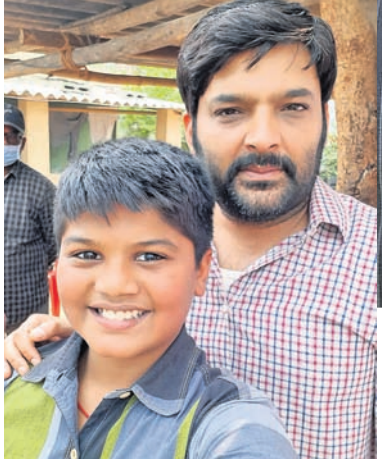
video of an elderly woman dancing to *Pathaan's* title track *Jhoom Jo Pathaan*. He responded to the video by saying, "It's really heartening and very very beautiful. Thank you so much, Meena ji for doing this. If I had seen you dance before, maybe we would have asked Deepika not to do it and you to do it. I am sure she wouldn't mind".

Directed by Siddharth Anand, *Pathaan* also starred John Abraham, Deepika Padukone, Dimple Kapadia, and Ashutosh Rana in the lead roles. The film did some record-breaking business at the box office.

AGENCIES



# Prajwal's dream debut



comfortable with him, as he is an extremely humble and friendly person. He never fails to make everybody laugh on the set."

Prajwal Sahoo is the grandson of Sarat Sahoo, founder of Ruchi Foodline, one of the leading manufacturers of spices and other food products in India. But this is not his only claim to fame. The 13-year-old and his family are tired of responding to the calls of their well wishers since the release of Nandita Das directorial *Zwigato*. After all, it is not every day that a child actor from Odisha makes his debut in a mainstream Hindi movie to play the son of 'King of Comedy' Kapil Sharma.

Sharing his experience with *Sunday POST*, the boy from Cuttack said he was very nervous on the first day of the shoot as he was facing the camera for the first time in his life. He had to give multiple takes but got confident enough with time.

Speaking about his rapport with Kapil, he said, "It was an amazing experience. I was both nervous and excited. Eventually, I became com-

When asked about the difference between real and reel life, he said that he found a stark contrast between his real life during COVID times and that of his reel life. At the time of COVID, he was able to spend more time with his dad because everything was happening in online mode. The communication was better as well, since they were all at home. In the movie, it is quite the opposite. His dad (Kapil Sharma) and mom (Shahana Goswami) are going out to do multiple deliveries and work, which lessens the quality family time.

Prajwal shared that he was able to manage his academics with the help of his teachers and principal, who accommodated with his schedule amidst his two-month long shoot.

Prajwal is fond of acting and uses his spare time to practice dialogues in front of a mirror at home. Apart from that, he likes playing basketball, dancing, beat boxing, rapping, and trying his hands at cooking.

SMRUTI REKHA BARIK, OP

# Tiger on finding his niche



Action superstar of this generation, Tiger Shroff has recently talked about his journey of getting his identity its individuality.

Tiger is one unique action star who enjoys a huge fan base all across the globe. He impressed the audiences and won them over with his action, stunts and good looks right from his debut

*Heropanti*. And over the years, he has proven himself the youngest action superstar across the globe.

Being the only one in his generation to be an action superstar, Tiger said, "It was intentional for me to differentiate myself and give my identity its individuality. I knew the way I perform the action is not what many people have seen here. I am very lucky to be accepted in the action-hero space".

AGENCIES



# Sara doesn't miss big screen anymore

*Atrangi Re* actress Sara Ali Khan, who started her acting career with *Kedarnath*, will be completing almost five years in the industry. She hasn't had a theatrical release since *Love Aaj Kal* (2020), and her upcoming movie *Gaslight* and *Ae Watan Mere Watan* are releasing directly on streaming platforms. In a recent interview with a media portal, she was asked if she feels insecure when one of her films doesn't come out for a long time in the theatres.

Sara answered, saying, "I miss the big screen every day. But after the re-

ception of *Atrangi Re*, which was released on Hotstar, I realised that if your story is true and your performance is honest, it will touch the audience's heart and brain. Of course, I became an actor for the theatre, and I am waiting, hopefully soon. But that is the producer's decision. So I don't think about it. When it comes to content, I think that if the content is strong, that's what will sell. I don't think the platform from which it is received matters as much as the nature of the content." *Gaslight* is set to release digitally March 31.

AGENCIES



# Care your hair, pick a serum

*Hair serum is a super quick and fun hair styling silicone-based liquid product that is used to coat the hair's surface to protect from all the nasties, like pollution, dust and dirt. Typically, hair serums contain silicone and active ingredients that nourish, strengthen and brighten your hair*



or dry. You may also have flyaways, or hair that looks like it's standing on end. Flyaways and frizz are never enjoyable. However, using a hair serum can help in nourishing and controlling frizzy hair before going for the hair spray. Consider using hair serum as your first line of defence and conclude it with hair spray. To get freedom from flyaways, take a pump or two of hair serum to your palms, rub them together, and then smooth the palms over the length of your hair.

■ **Add luster-** Hair serums can improve your hair's lustre. Use a shine-enhancing serum before shampooing to hydrate the hair or before styling, to manage the hair and polish the strands. It will also help in achieving velvety hair smoothness and a glossy shine. Hair serums improve the natural structure and texture of the hair, resulting in sleeker, more defined hair, enhancing the hair's natural look.

■ **Nurture dry hair-** In addition to feeling scratchy, parched hair frequently seems dull and lifeless, which doesn't exactly give a boost

to your confidence. The hair can benefit from an increase in hydration derived from a decent serum and created with nourishing components while also hiding evident indications of dryness and damage, including frizz, breakage, and split ends.

■ **Protection from humidity-** Your hair puffs up, the moment you step outside in humid weather when air moisture levels are high. While having thick or puffy hair is something you can't change, you have control over how it responds to environmental elements like artificial heat and humidity by using the appropriate hair serum.

■ **Make your strands softer-** Damaged or dry hair seems fragile to the touch and may suffer breakage. By applying hair serum you can help revive your strands and make your tresses smoother and simpler to handle.

■ **Damage control-** Damage can result from over-colouring or hot-tool styling of the hair. To overcome the deficiency of natural oils in your strands, using a hair serum is a terrific approach to replenish moisture and help seal the hair cuticle, which has been damaged. It works as a protective shield that nourishes the hair deeply and doesn't allow them to get greasy.



■ **Help in detangling-** After washing your hair, trying to detangle it can be a real nuisance. However, a few drops of hair serum applied to towel-dried hair can facilitate detangling. Your fingers or brush will have an easier time gliding through your strands because of the serum.

The serum can make your hair healthy and manageable by improving its shine, smoothness, and hydration. It conditions the hair, strengthens each strand, and provides long-lasting styles. After shampooing, place 4 to 5 drops of the serum on your palm and gently massage it into your hair. Then, let your hair air dry as usual.



SHAHNAZ HUSAIN







# Nagaja

PHOTO: KAMAL PHOTOGRAPHY